

# Book Reviews

The Western Journal of Medicine does not review all books sent by publishers, although information about new books received is printed elsewhere in the journal as space permits. Prices quoted are those given by the publishers.

**VITAMINS AND 'HEALTH' FOODS: The Great American Hustle**—Victor Herbert, MD, JD, Professor of Medicine, State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, Chief, Hematology and Nutrition Laboratory, Bronx VA Medical Center, and Stephen Barrett, MD, Chairman, Board of Directors, Lehigh Valley Committee Against Health Fraud, Inc. George F. Stickley Company, 210 West Washington Square, Philadelphia, PA 19106, 1981. 189 pages, \$11.95.

This is the latest in a series of books on health fakery and quackery, edited by America's prime quack-kicker, Stephen Barrett, MD. This one is written by Victor Herbert, MD, JD, professor of medicine at New York University. His knowledge of nutrition quackery is encyclopedic.

The book is an up-to-date exposé of so-called "health food" quacks, their organizations, marketing techniques and economic and political methods of bamboozling the public while staying just within the law, and sometimes outside of it.

Herbert and Barrett present the misrepresentation of vitamins and so-called health foods and supplements as a serious national problem. There seems to be no field wherein so much misinformation has so much public tolerance.

They present many hard-hitting facts. For instance, Shaklee, of the food products company, was a chiropractor. He and his two sons owned \$62 million in stock in their company as of 1980. Herbert discusses the company's marketing techniques. Robert Atkins, MD, (the Atkins' Diet), is said to promote vitamins as being more effective than medications against disease. "Dr" Carlton Frederick (not his real name) has a degree in communication and no significant training in nutrition. Yet, he is worshipped as America's number one nutrition authority and was once convicted of practicing medicine without a license. The list goes on and on.

Herbert shows how the National Nutritional Foods Association advises "health food" store proprietors on avoiding Food and Drug Administration regulations on false labeling; how to give nutritional advice without appearing to prescribe; how to get on radio and TV.

Another chapter records illogical and unscientific court and administrative rulings that allow hustling to exist. There is a good section on the dispute over the concept of the terms "organic" and "natural."

There are some defects. For instance, there are five references to "vitamin B<sub>12</sub>," decrying its fraudulent promotion and inconsistent contents, but no mention of what its main ingredients usually are (dimethylglycine or dichloroacetate, or both, plus inert materials). Several chapters contain passages taken from Barrett's prior publications—especially *The Health Robbers* (without credits), but there is also updated material that makes the reading worthwhile.

Herbert's previous book *Nutrition Cultism* is a more complete and technical review of clinical and biochemical information. Together with this volume, they make a good pair. Any physician whose patients may be involved in nutrition cults should have these two books for reference. Also buy a copy and donate it to your public library.

WALLACE I. SAMPSON, MD  
Mountain View, California

**SPORTS MEDICINE: Fitness, Training, Injury**—Edited by Otto Appenzeller, MD, PhD, and Ruth Atkinson, MD. Urban & Schwarzenberg, Inc., 7 East Redwood St., Baltimore, MD 21202, 1981. 395 pages, 119 illustrations, \$39.50.

This book was written for medical students enrolled in the sports medicine course at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine. As a text it touches on the entire field of "sports

medicine" from exercise physiology to injury management but in a manner obviously designed to support lectures. The sections on the nervous system, nutrition, hormones, fluids and electrolytes, and exercise physiology are well documented literature reviews. Unfortunately most of the authors fail to place the reviewed material in perspective and thus the reader is left with bits and pieces and the task of looking up the references—fine for students but perhaps unrealistic for practicing physicians.

The two chapters (temperature regulation and nutrition) written by the editors are excellent. Not only is the literature thoroughly reviewed but the information is collated into a readable narrative form.

The final section (injuries and locomotion) deals primarily with athletic trauma. Although this section touches on all of the injuries that might occur in sports, those problems that occur on a daily basis are given little more attention than those seen once in a lifetime. In addition there is scant attention paid to the sports-specific injuries that are often the most troublesome to diagnose and manage.

The need for aggressive and knowledgeable rehabilitation is the primary difference between managing athletic injuries and managing garden variety soft tissue trauma. For physicians seeking guidance in this area the book will be of little help. Although the descriptions of diagnostic techniques are somewhat more complete they are still inadequate for a physician not already familiar with the performance of these various tests.

The book would be a good investment for two groups of persons: medical students and practicing physicians desiring a relatively current literature review of those aspects of sports medicine not related to injuries. For physicians seeking assistance in diagnosing athletic injuries or in formulating treatment programs, it offers little.

JAMES G. GARRICK, MD  
Director, Center for Sports Medicine  
Saint Francis Memorial Hospital  
San Francisco

\* \* \*

**DRUGS DURING PREGNANCY: Clinical Perspectives**—Raja W. Abdul-Karim, MD; with contributions by Howard J. Osofsky, MD, PhD; Donald R. Mattison, MD, and Roger Scott, JD. George F. Stickley Company, 210 West Washington Square, Philadelphia, PA 19106, 1981. 152 pages, \$15.00.

The thalidomide disaster and the recognition that a number of other drugs such as diphenylhydantoin and sodium warfarin may be human teratogens have emphasized the potential risk of medications in pregnant women. The dilemma is confounded by the fact that the effects of some drugs may not be apparent until years after they are prescribed—for example, the consequences of diethylstilbestrol. Our knowledge of these risks is far from complete and what information there is has often been difficult to obtain. How many of us have been frustrated when using the PDR and finding the statement, "The safe use of this medication in pregnancy has not been established"? In order to evaluate the risks of medications one must not only have an understanding of teratology and principles of drug transfer, but must also have an appreciation for the pitfalls inherent in this type of research. Dr Abdul-Karim has undertaken an ambitious project in his book *Drugs During Pregnancy—Clinical Perspectives*. Several chapters are devoted to instruction in basic principles of drug transfer and teratology. Approximately half of the book is devoted to discussion of specific medications and an assessment of their influence on pregnancy outcome. There is a chapter on the mechanisms of drug toxicity and a discussion of reproductive toxins with num-